



IMPORTANCE OF YOGA FROM THE PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Arpita Choudhury

Faculty of Acharya Prafulla Chandra College, New Bararckpore, Kolkata, West Bengal, India.

ABSTRACT

Yoga is a spiritual discipline that is found in every school of Indian Philosophy. Yoga Darśan also known as Yoga system was founded by Patañjali and is one of the most orthodox schools of Philosophy. According to the Yoga Darśan, meaning of the word “Yoga” is to unite with level of mind that is free from five Vṛttis. This state of mind is called Chitto Vṛtti Nirodha and is achieved through meditation and following eight paths those are mentioned as Aṣṭāṅga Yoga.

According to Yoga Sutra, the term Yoga is stated as the process of re-uniting the mind with a state where there is calmness without any fluctuations. There are five Vṛttis: Pramāṇa, Viparyaya, Vikalpa, Nidrā and Smṛti.

In Yoga, God is considered as the highest self and is thought to be distinct from other human selves. The purpose of Yoga is to realize the reality of the transcendental self which is free from different mental states like desire, greed, hatred, attachment and anger. Yoga advocates control over the body, mind and sense organs. In Yoga Darśan Puruṣa is considered as eternally pure and conscious self. One can be united with Puruṣa by virtue of Yoga.

The main objective of this article is to focus on the importance of Yoga from the perspective of Yoga Darśan. In following sections, I will try to elaborate on the below mentioned points:

- Definition of Yoga along with the five Vṛttis and Bhūmis.
- Concept of Integral Yoga.
- Transformation of mind from lower to higher level.

KEYWORDS: Chitta, Mind, Yoga, Cognition, Avidya, Liberation.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The meaning of Yoga is spiritual union of the individual soul with the universal soul. Yoga is a practice with the spirit. It is the practical path by which one can attain viveka jñāna. It is self-realization that leads to liberation. There are four paths of Yoga sutra. The first part is samādhi-pāda. This path describes the nature and aim of Yoga. The second path is sādhanā-pāda which explains the way to realize the aim of Yoga. The third path is vibhūti-pāda. This path deals with the supreme powers which can be gained by the process of Yoga. The fourth path is kaivalya-pāda. This path describes the nature of liberation and to go beyond the physical realm.

2. DEFINITION OF YOGA ALONG WITH THE FIVE VṚTTIS AND BHUMIS:

According to Patañjali, Yoga is a system to cease the modification of chitta or mind. When the mind realizes the complete isolation from the physical world that is called Yoga. In this stage mind is devoid of sorrow, greed, desires, anger etc. This state of mind comes only by the complete devotion to God or inner self. So, Yoga is the cessation of modification of chitta or mind. Because when the mind comes into the contact with the external object it grasps the form of that objects through the external sense organs. According to the Yoga sutra of Patañjali, to modify our mind we need to free our mind from five Vṛttis or waves of disturbance, otherwise one cannot achieve the calm state of mind. If one's mind is loaded with blemishes and ignorance, right cognition of any object of external world cannot be achieved by prāmaṇas such as perception, anumāṇa and verbal testimony. Yoga is a process by which one can control this negative state of mind through meditation or devotion to one's own inner self. Right cognition means knowledge of the real features of any objects or reality. By the system of Yoga one can achieve reality. Through the process of Yoga mind will be free from wrong cognition, otherwise one cannot move towards Moksha. So, through these three pramaṇas one cannot be able to acquire the right cognition unless one's mind is free from Avidyā. According to Patañjali, mind need to be free from Viparyaya or wrong cognition that is if one's mind is filled with pride, anger, hatred, ignorance and fear, one cannot know the reality of this world. Like other Vṛttis of mind Vikalpa is another illusory state of mind which is like wrong imagination. Yoga sutra says, this type of wrong imagination happens through verbal testimony. This type of Vṛtti occurs, when we assume things that actually do not exist in this world like hare's horn. Nidrā is called absence of knowledge. It is state of mental modification because after sleep one can say that, 'I slept sound and knew nothing'. From this statement we can easily say that, there must be some mental modification to support this statement. If there is no Vṛttis in sleeping state, one cannot remember that there is no knowledge at the time of sleeping. It proves that at the time of Nidrā, Vṛtti is also present. Next Vṛtti is called Smṛti that is the recollection of past experience through the impression left

behind. According to Yoga sutra, one has to control the mind from these five Vṛttis. Otherwise, one cannot be free from the bondage of self. Unless one is free from these five Vṛttis, one cannot know the reality. Life is full of ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion and fear of death. The bondage of self is due to wrong cognition. The cessation of the mental modification is the aim of Yoga. To achieve this aim one need meditation and full devotion to own inner self.

There are five levels of ChittaBhumi which are the main causes of mental fluctuations. The differences in these five levels of mind are due to the predominance of three Gunas like Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. These five stages of mind are:

- **Kṣipta:** This is the lowest level of ChittaBhumi. At this stage mind is restless due to the excess of Rajas. This state is unsteady and unable to concentrate on particular thing.
- **Mudha:** The next ChittaBhumi is called Mudha or infatuated. This infatuated mind has predominance of Tama Guna. This ChittaBhumi tends towards ignorance, lethargy and violent emotions.
- **Vikṣipta:** Vikṣipta Bhumi has predominance of both Sattva and Rajas. Due to the effect of Sattva Guna mind is sometime steady but due to the effect of Rajas mind is not permanently steady. At this stage the influence of Sattva mind is able to free from painful objects and fixed on pleasurable objects.
- **Ekagra:** In this ChittaBhumi, mind is entirely dominated by Sattva Guna. At this stage mind is able to concentrate on the objects of meditation and is to remain focused on one object.
- **Niruddha:** This is the fifth and the highest ChittaBhumi. At this stage the restrained mind is fully influenced by Sattva Guna. This is the perfect state of Yoga where there are no mental modes and sub-conscious dispositions.

Yoga advocates control over the body, senses and mind. Patañjali defined the eight fold path of Yoga known as Aṣṭāṅga Yoga. The purpose of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga is purification of mind and body. He defined the eight paths as Yama, Niyama, Asana, Prāṇāyāma, Pratyahara, Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi.

Yama or abstinences: Yamas are considered as ethical rules in Yoga Darśan. It can be thought as moral imperatives. It includes five vows: Ahimsā, Satya, Asteya, Brahmacharya and Aparigraha. Ahimsā means non-violence. It is abstention from injury of thought, word or deed. Satya is abstention from false-

hood i.e. truthfulness. Asteya is non-stealing. Brahmacharya is sexual restraint. Aparigraha is non-possessiveness. These five moral imperatives help an individual to put control on mind and body and attain personal growth.

Niyama: It includes virtual habits. First Niyama is Shaucha that is internal and external purification of mind, speech and body. Second Niyama is Santosha or contentment. It is a mental state of acceptance. The third Niyama is Tapas. It is a state of austerity and self-discipline. The fourth Niyama is Svādhyāya. It includes study of vedas and self-reflection. The fifth Niyama is Ishvarapranidhāna. It includes devotion to God or supreme-being.

Āsana: It is a steady and comfortable posture for a period of time. There are different kinds of postures for sitting meditation is to keep chest, neck and head erect. Āsana is a proper physical posture which helps to meditate in a proper way. Āsana is a proper discipline of the body for the meditation.

Prāṇāyāma: It is control of breath with regulation of inhalation retention and exhalation of breath. It is beneficial for the concentration of mind as well as health.

Pratyāhāra: It is the control of the senses and is drawing within one's awareness. It is the process of introversion.

These five are called external aids of Yoga. But remaining three are internal aids of Yoga. These internal aids are Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna, Samādhi.

Dhāraṇā: It is a level of concentration of mind on the object of meditation and introspective focus on one pointedness of mind.

Dhyāna: It is an uninterrupted thought process. It is a state where mind can be fixed on the objects of meditation. Dhyāna is integrally related to Dhāraṇā. Dhyāna is a mind process where mind is fixed on a particular thing. It is a course of uniform modification of knowledge.

Samadhi: It is the oneness with the subject of meditation. At this stage mind is completely absorbed on the object of meditation. In Dhyāna, the act of meditation and the object of meditation become one. Samadhi is a spiritual state. It is the highest means to realize the cessation of mental modification. One has to pass this stage before obtaining liberation.

Through Yoga one can generate certain supreme powers. By the process of Aṣṭāṅga Yoga one can purify the mind and body which is essential to realize the supreme reality of life. One can reach the supra-conscious level.

3. CONCEPT OF INTEGRAL YOGA:

Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is called integral Yoga. According to Aurobindo integral Yoga is called supramental Yoga. Sri Aurobindo finds that the basic aim of all kind of Yoga is the realization of Divine. Sri Aurobindo believes that the ultimate destiny of the process of evolution will be a Divine life. In the Divine life all beings will be liberated. In order to define Integral Yoga Sri Aurobindo says that, Yoga is a method based effort towards self-perfection by the secret potentialities which is present in the nature of human being. Yoga is a rapid and concentrated evolution. This Divine union is beyond the transcendental or cosmic or individual and so is called Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is different from Patañjali's Yoga because he never recommended prayers and mantras. His Yoga is an inner-Yoga requiring some disciplines of purification and spiritualization which anyone can practice.

4. TRANSFORMATION OF MIND FROM LOWER TO HIGHER LEVEL:

Sri Aurobindo says that individual liberation is an aspect of ultimate goal in Divine life. According to him Yoga is the effort to move from higher-mind to Super-mind through a process that is known as path of ascent. This is the reason to describe Sri Aurobindo's Yoga as inner Yoga.

5. RESULT:

Patañjali in his Yoga Darśan has tried to prove that human beings have to free themselves from pain, sorrow, attachment and ignorance in order to reach the complete transformed state of every aspect of human life. As Sri Aurobindo says, knowledge and devotion are not opposed to each other. Rather they are interconnected as through gaining knowledge and overcoming ignorance one can attain intense devotion that leads to mental, physical and vital transformations completely. This is called integral Yoga. The purpose of Yoga is to free oneself from the illusory empirical world and reach the spiritual world where reality of life can be found.

6. CONCLUSION:

In daily lives of human beings, stress management is a major challenge and if it left unmanaged, it leads to several health, relational and occupational issues in different phases of life. One can follow the paths defined in Yoga Darśan and also in Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga to achieve mental peace and all round development in life.

REFERENCES:

- I. Patañjali, Maharishi-The Yoga Sutras.
- II. Shearer Alistair-The Yoga Sutras of Patañjali.
- III. Satchidananda Swami, Sri-The Yoga Sutras of Patañjali.
- IV. Aurobindo, Sri- The Life Divine, Pondicherry, 1955.
- V. Aurobindo, Sri-The Human Cycle, Pondicherry, 1949.